

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4749

INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE DACCA 2779

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, BG

SUBJECT: MORE SUPPORT FOR ZIA

REF: DACCA 2735

1. SEVERAL MORE POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR SUPPORT FOR GENERAL ZIA'S MAY 30 REFERENDUM. PROFESSOR MUZAFFAR AHMED, HEAD OF THE NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY (MUZAFFAR), MAY 22 URGED ALL PEOPLE TO SUPPORT ZIA "IN ORDER TO REALIZE THE 19-POINT PROGRAMS, INCLUDING SOCIALISM." LEADERS OF THE BANGLADESH JATIYA DAL (LED BY MRS. AMEENA BEGUM) AND THE WORLD MUSLIM PEACE COUNCIL MADE SIMILAR APPEALS.

2. ON MAY 21, AN OPINION POLL WAS RELEASED IN DACCA WHICH INDICATED THAT ZIA WOULD RECEIVE 87 TO 89 PERCENT OF THE VOTES CAST MAY 30. THE OTHER 11 TO 13 PERCENT OF THE VOTERS INDICATED THAT THEY WERE AS YET UNDECIDED. THESE RESULTS WERE THE PRODUCT OF A SO-CALL GALLUP POLL ON THE "PRESENT DAY LEADERSHIP POPULARITY IN BANGLADESH"

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AND AN OPINION POLL SURVEY ON "GENERAL ZIAUR RAHMAN'S PROPOSED REFERENDUM" CONDUCTED BY "THE POPULARIZATION OF THE PEOPLE'S PROGRAM" (PPP), DESCRIBED IN THE PRESS AS A MASS COMMUNICATIONS CONSULTATION CONCERN. ACCORDING TO M.A. ISLAM, THE PROJECT DIRECTOR, THE RESULTS OF THE POLL INDICATE THAT TO THE PEOPLE, ZIA "IS A SYMBOL OF (AN) HONEST, DEDICATED AND ABLE ADMINISTRATOR, WHO IS ALSO A

GREAT FREEDOM FIGHTER AND A GOOD MUSLIM." THE PROJECT DIRECTOR ALSO INDICATED THAT ZIA'S POPULARITY STOOD AT 80 PERCENT IN NOVEMBER, 1976, AT THE TIME THE GENERAL ELECTIONS WERE POSTPONED, AND AT 73 PERCENT IN FEBRUARY, 1977.

3. COMMENT: WHILE THE STATISTICAL RELIABILITY OF ANY OPINION POLL IN BANGLADESH MUST BE QUESTIONABLE, THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT GENERAL ZIA IS POPULAR. THE QUESTION BEING ASKED IN POLITICAL CIRCLES NOW, HOWEVER, IS NOT WHETHER HE CAN PRODUCE A RESPECTABLE VOTER TURNOUT MAY 30. TWO DACCA UNIVERSITY POLITICAL SCIENTISTS SAY THEY WILL BE SURPRISED IF 50 PERCENT SHOW UP TO VOTE (IN 1970 THE PARTICIPATION WAS 57 PERCENT).
MASTERS

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